

Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center
http://gacc.nifc.gov/eacc/dispatch_centers/ILC/index.htm
2013 End of the Year Report



Little Grand Canyon Fire, Shawnee National Forest Service
Picture courtesy of Pat York

Shawnee National Forest Service
Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
Golconda Job Corps
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
United States National Park Service
Illinois Department of Natural Resources



2013 Year End Report

2013 started off quit normal. No issues with Natural Disasters, no personnel changes, no issues with the facility, and no issues with day to day business...it looked like it was going to be a business as usual year, and then came **"The Furlough"** A quaint little word that meant, you were being laid off until further notice. Fire personnel were fortunate to work thru the furlough, but the work was shared with Jennifer and I split the work days while Diana was completely furloughed. Once the furlough ended, we went back to normal schedule, just in time for Diana to be laid off.

The Dispatch Center spent its first full year (again) here at the Murphysboro facility with only a few, minor instances where we felt like we were back on the refuge. In the spring we had to call the "Critter Catcher" to help us catch what was crawling around and tearing up the ceiling tiles in the women's bathroom down stairs. We had some basement flooding going on in the spring, so we brought in plumbers only to find out the water (from the continuous spring rain) was filling up in the window sill and floating across the ceiling floor, out the crawlspace, behind the wall, out through the floor boards and down the hall. It took days before things dried out. So basically a "normal" year is not how 2013 went.

The first fire of the season was a State fire in the Wildcat Hollow State Habitat Area in February and our last fire was a vehicle fire at Eagle Mountain on FS lands in November. The first prescribed fire was the DNR Donnelly Ridge burn in February, while the last one completed was at Oakwood in November by the Forest Service, right before the snow arrived. At the end of the year on the Sit report, for all agencies, we turned in 22 wildland fires for 53 acres and 108 RX projects for 11,849 acres (this does not include the final report DNR sends us).

In March we brought a helicopter in to assist the Forest with burning projects and any wild fire activities that may occur, but wouldn't you know, the rains arrived the day after they did so we were unable to utilize them as intended. They left at the end of March and our wildland fire/prescribed fire activities picked up again in April. The largest fire we supported was the Little Grand Canyon fire which burned 18 acres of very steep Forest Service lands and it was because of this fire that we brought down the Midewin Hotshots to give us a hand. Our spring fire and burning season ended the end of April.

Molly once again was trying to justify her college education (Recreation Degree), by volunteering to head up the "Forest All Employee Day", which turned out to be fun and a huge success. She also was the catalyst on the development of a Dispatch Newsletter which she presented to Eastern and Southern Area dispatchers at the Dispatch Workshop in November receiving resounding support from the dispatch community. Her goal is to make it a "National Dispatch Newsletter". She continues to be a member of the National ROSS change Board, and has since volunteered to be the "Business Manager" for the Eastern Area Coordinating Group (EACG).

Jennifer and Diana were busy with fire assignments in 2013. Jennifer took two fire assignments one to Michigan in the spring and to her old center in California. She also continues to be the Eastern Area WildCad Representative. Diana took a 21 day detail (as a casual hire) to the Allegheny as their Initial Attack Dispatcher (T) in early spring. DNR paid for Diana to help us out a few hours a week from February to April then the Forest picked her up in May. Prior to being hired back, she also advised us that this would be her last year and that she would be moving up north to where her family was, so her last day was in October.

Our fall fire season ended abruptly with a Winter Weather ice/sleet/snow event the first week of December. Even though beautiful, it put an end to any windows for prescribed fire activities we may have had before seasonal personnel were laid off.

Nationally the PL level stayed consistently at a 3 and 4 with only hitting a PL 5 for a short period of time. Even so, we were able to process more resource orders than the previous 3 years, we saw a jump in the number of National Park Service employees mobilized, and we saw a slight increase of training assignments. The only thing we were not able to do was get the Golconda Job Corps Camp Crew mobilized. Our Fire Camp program dropped almost 50% in participation, mainly due to center enrollment numbers going from 230 to 90 due to an 8 month suspended agency enrollment suspension and a large number of students graduating from their respective programs. On a positive note, it was a much smoother year when it came to obtaining all the necessary documentation, so in that sense it was a good year.



Our Casual hire program was typical for 2013 with 15 enrolling throughout the year. The majority of our casual hires are used in national mobilizations in dispatch, logistics and planning while only a few have arduous fire qualifications. Of these 15, there were 11 mobilizations (with 2 AD's taking 2 assignments each) while locally we utilized 1 casual hire for 3.5 days during the Little Grand Canyon Fire.

One of the things we tried to develop among us dispatchers was a "get out and work" day (s) where we would take a day and work alongside other forest employees in hopes to get a better understanding of what they do and maybe share a bit about what we do in dispatch. I worked with Brian Bourne in Recreation on setting up two excursions where I tagged along with Aaron Miller when he made his developed recreation site runs (I actually cleaned bathrooms) and I spent a day with Eric Stead and the trails crew putting rock down on a new trail. I had a great time, learned a great deal of what their jobs entail and I got to know other employees. This is something that I really want to ramp up in 2014 because I feel it is really important to not only us in the dispatch center, but the forest as a whole.

By the time 2013 ended, we were getting ready for 2014. 2014 looks to be a busy beginning for us with training, travel, hiring, etc. Hopefully the weather will comply and all agencies can get some prescribed burning completed early and not have a mad rush come April. Whatever the 2014 year brings, I'm certain we are prepared and ready to take it on.

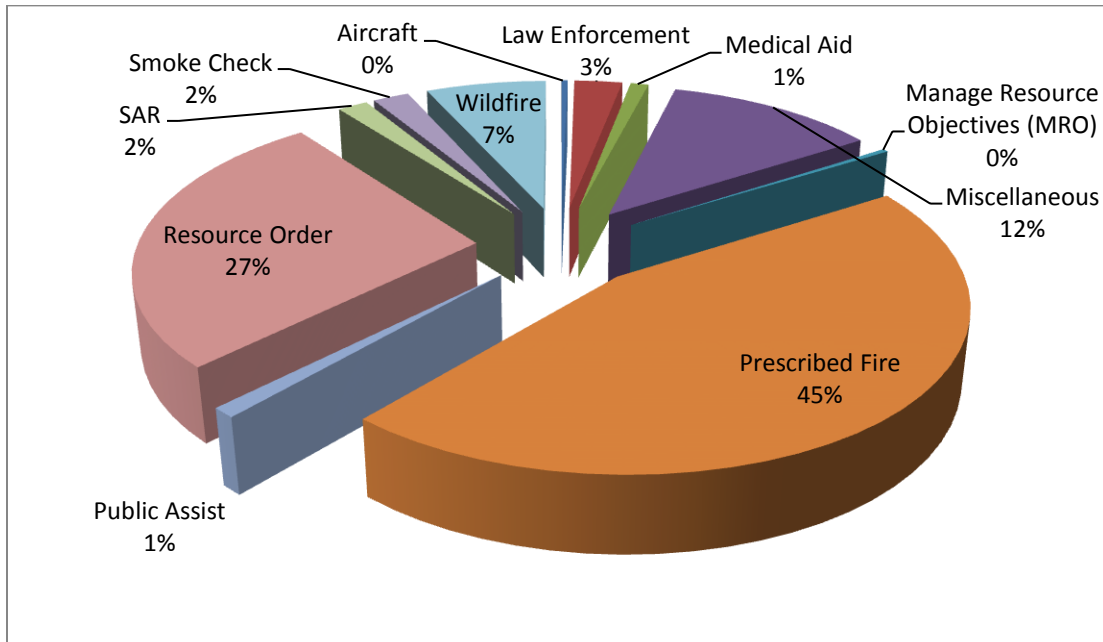
Molly and Jennifer

PS. As you can tell by this, and previous years reports, I like graphs. I'm a very visual person, and having a clear picture in my head, which the graphs create, is so much easier to comprehend than just numbers. 😊

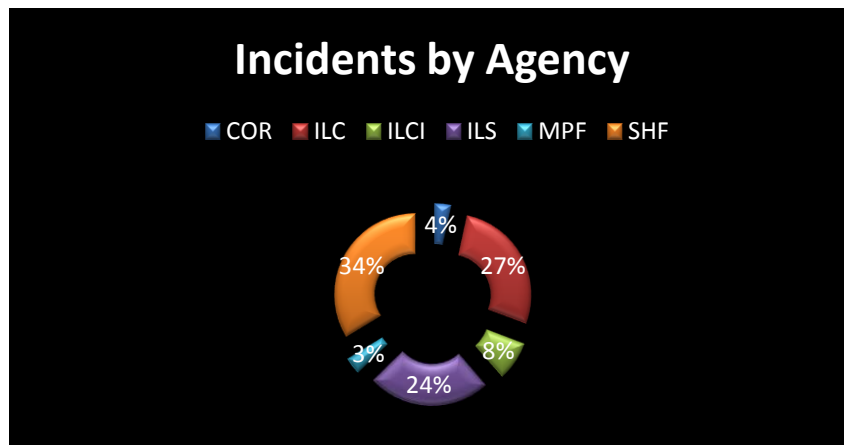
Incident Actions

Each Year, ILC (Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center) works at trying to improve information received as well as information dispersed. We do a type of AAR at the end of each year, to see how we can improve in capturing all we do. The WildCad program is our best friend in tracking specific parts of our workload. It is constantly changing and improving, just like us, therefore each year you may see additional “types” of activities which we track.

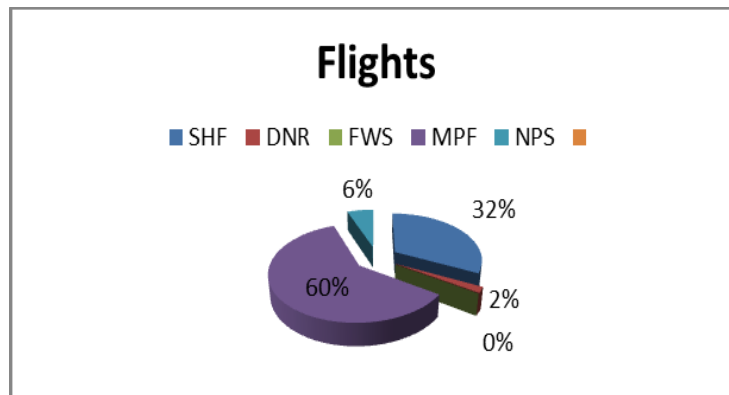
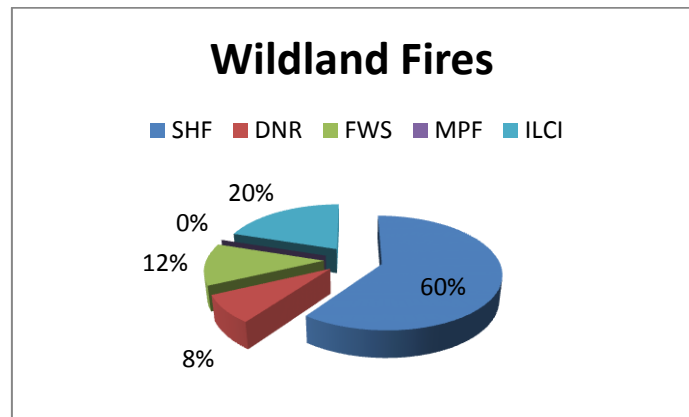
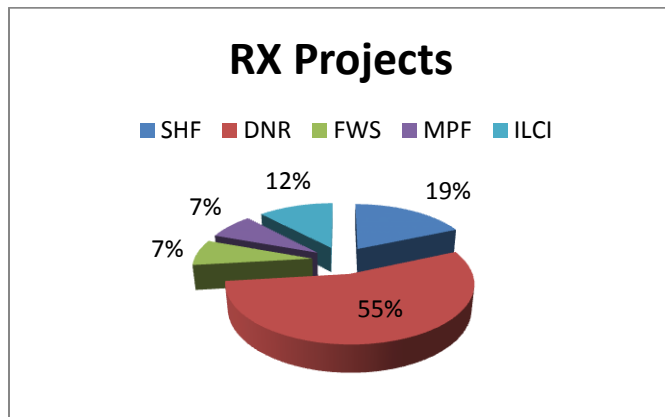
2013 ILC Incidents



Above is a breakdown of WildCAD incidents from 2013. As you can see prescribed fire is still our largest work load. It should be noted that with the new version of WildCAD, a new category was added. Manage Resource Objectives (MRO) category helps the center capture agencies treatment of things like Non Native Invasive Species (NNIS). **Below is a breakdown per agency:** COR=Crab Orchard NWR, ILC=Illinois Interagency Dispatch (resource orders, weather announcements etc.), ILCI=Mutual Aid and Private, ILS= Illinois DNR, MPF=Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, SHF=Shawnee National Forest.



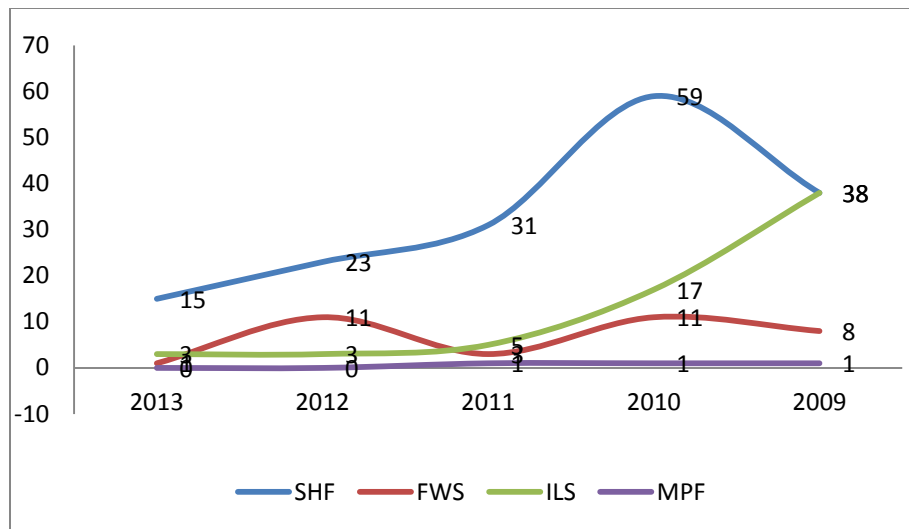
Over all, by agency, the Forest Service still continues to be our biggest workload, however, the below graphs show that depending on what it is we are providing, weather it is initial attack communications, supporting prescribed fire activities, or mobilizing resources, each agency has a niche where their agency utilizes us more than the others.



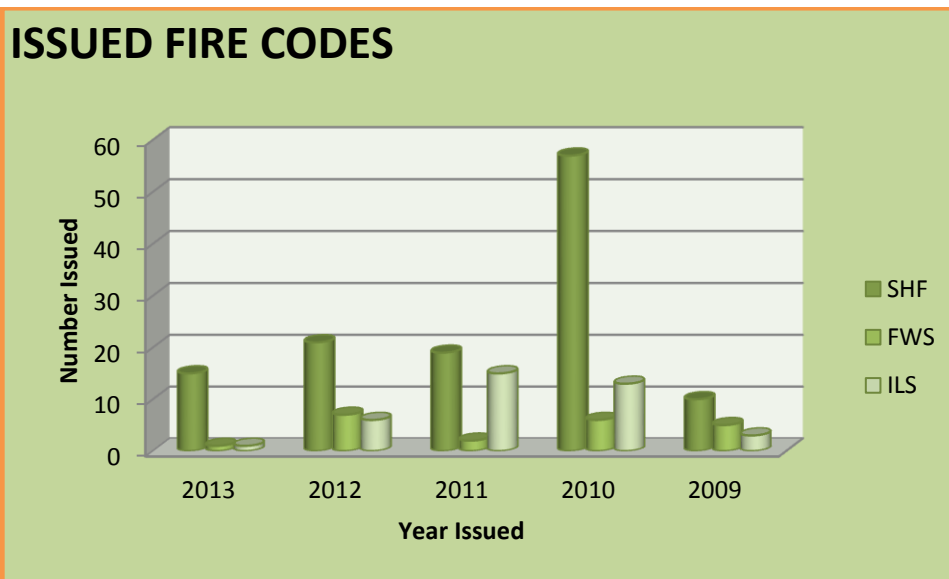
Wildland Fires

Never knowing what the year will be like for wild fire activity, we work real hard at being prepared for anything. We want to provide, in a timely manner, the most accurate and current information to our responding resources as well as fire managers. In order to do this affectively, we first need a few moments (after the county tones out the fire department) to access all our “tools” such as WildCad, Acme or Google mapper, as well as time to call the 911 center to clarify and gather information such as addresses/location, who is responding, who the RP is, etc.,. In 2013 we began utilizing the texting capabilities in WildCad so we can alert fire managers of the incident, freeing us up from making additional phone calls, or receiving additional phone calls during the most active part of the incident.

2013 was a very quiet year for wildland fire activities for all agencies. You can see by the graphs below the notable decline in activity the last 5 years for the Forest Service, Fish and Wildlife and the State of Illinois. There are many variables in why, but the main culprit is the weather. By having a wet spring and wet fall, the windows of opportunity for wildfires to occur diminished.

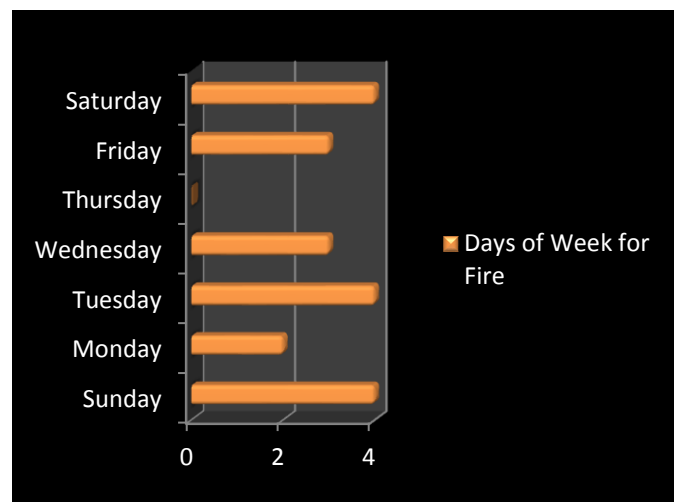
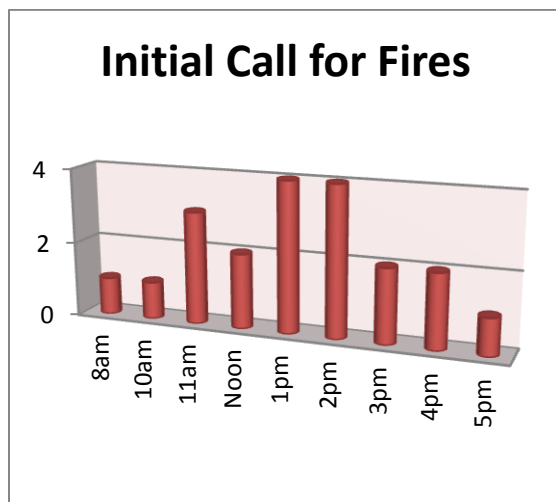


This graph shows the ebb and flow of wildland fires for all agencies over a 5 year period. As you can tell, Midewin stays consistent with activity; Fish and Wildlife Service activity goes up and down but in a pretty consistent fashion; The State fires have gone down over the years, but much of that is the way things get reported to us and to Tom; and the Forest Service fires have gone down the last few years, but some of that is attributed to the wet years we have been having.



One of the most important things we do is retrieve a Fire Code or PCode, for billing purposes. All human caused fires received their own special billing code. Natural caused fires, such as lightning, have a set code to use, however 99% of the fires we engage in are human caused. These codes are utilized for incident expenses such as personnel time, supplies, travel to and from incidents, etc. 2013, as you can see, was a slow year for obtaining codes, especially for cooperator related incidents.

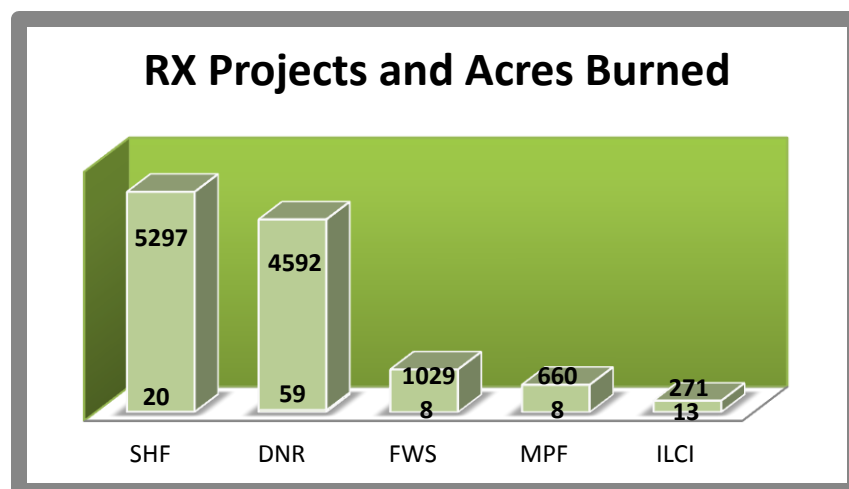
Wildland fires can occur anytime. However here in the East, and especially in Illinois, our burning periods typically are in late morning or early afternoon. It is always fun to see when the majority of our fire calls come into the center. In 2013 it looks like the best times for someone to call in a fire and receive help is on Thursday's between the hours of 8 and 10 am or after 5pm.



Prescribed Fires

If you look at prior year end reports, you will notice that prescribed fires continue to be our biggest work load. With the State DNR working closer with us on reporting their prescribed fire efforts, I suspect that prescribed fire activities will continue to be our largest workload. Currently we only receive about 45% of projects which the DNR provide throughout the state.

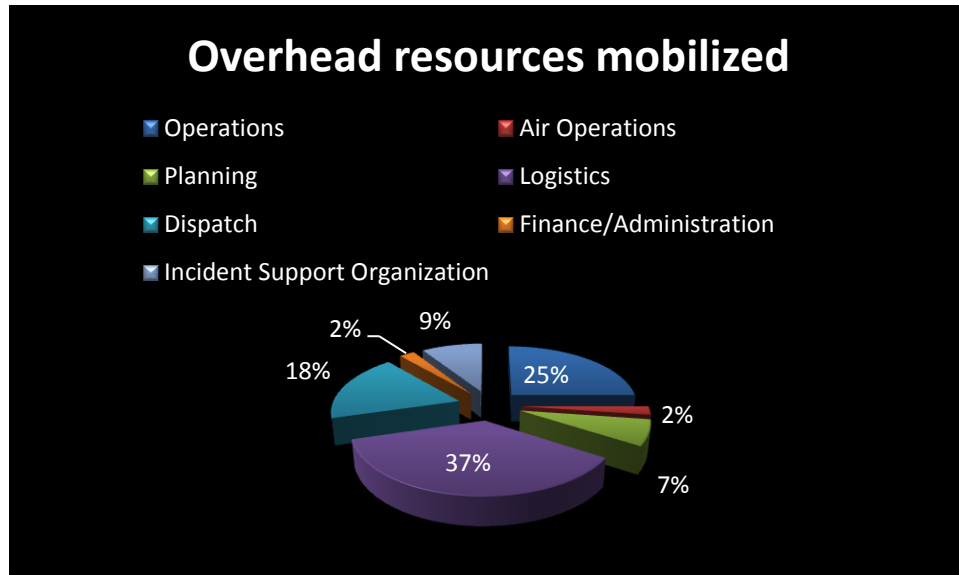
When we receive notice of a burn from DNR Burn Boss's, even though the DNR has a burn plan and is doing the actual project burn, we report it on the sit report as either a State (ILS) or Private (ILCI). It all comes down to actual property owner. For example, DNR notified us of 72 RX projects (59 on State Lands, 13 on Private lands) for 4863 acres (271 private Acres), however once Tom was able to obtain most of the yearly data, DNR Burn Boss's actually provided 129 RX projects totaling 9260 acres (this includes all private acres as well).



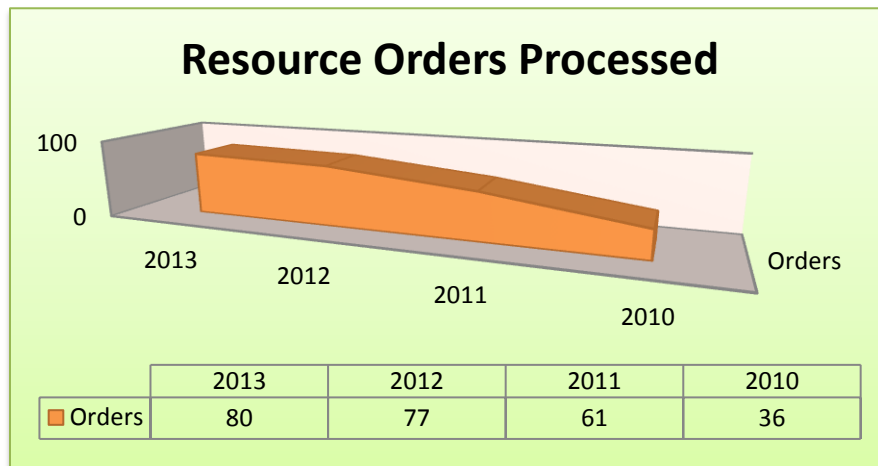
Above graph is what we reported at the end of the year (not all DNR acres were reported by this time)

MOBILIZATIONS

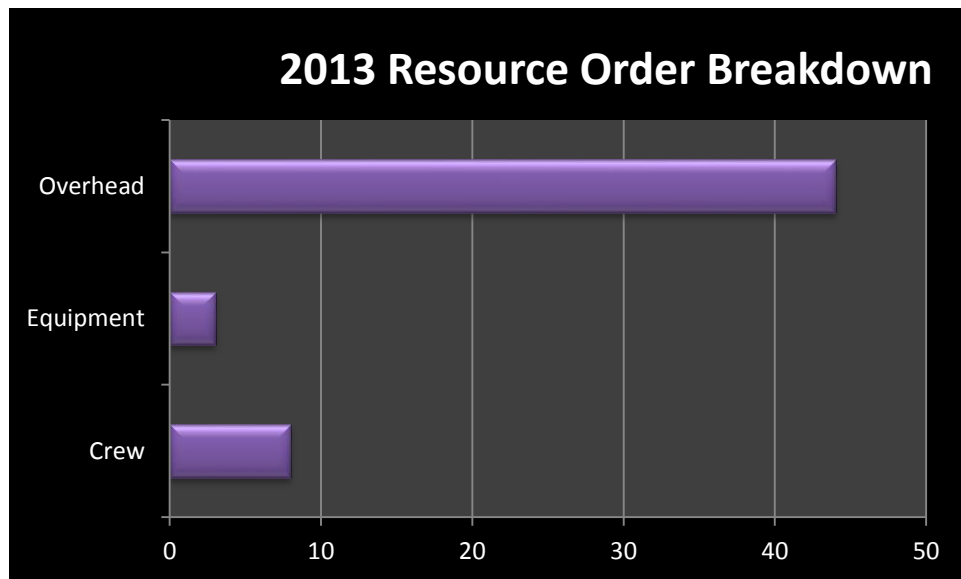
Second to Prescribed Fire activities, mobilizing resources throughout the country is what kept us busy. We typically start mobilizing overhead and or equipment in the early spring, and this year was no different. Our first mobilization was sending Diana to the Allegheny National Forest on a 21 day detail in March, and our last mobilization was in November sending Engine 641 to the Monongahela National Forest to assist in one of their biggest fires ever.



2013 we saw an increase in the number of agency employees participating on National Buying Teams. The above category of Incident Support Organization pertains to our Buying Team participants.

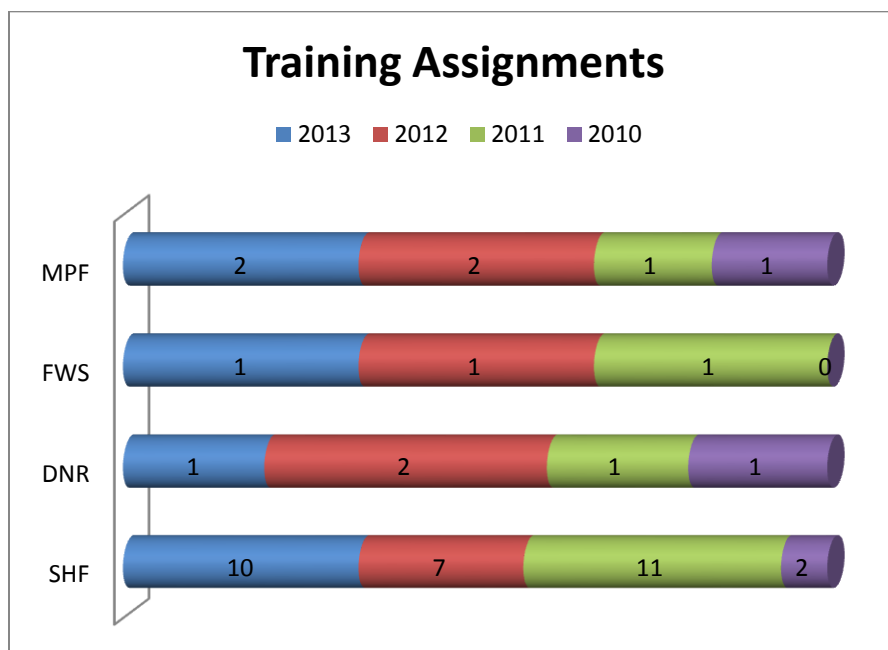


2013 we also increased the number of resource orders we processed. You can see there has been a steady increase in orders processed through our center. Of this, 44 were for individual overhead, 3 were equipment, 8 were crew and the rest were for numerous things like hosting and mobilizing the National Radio Cache and Smoke Monitoring kits, re-assigned resources we brought in, drivers to take overhead to STL, miscellaneous items etc.

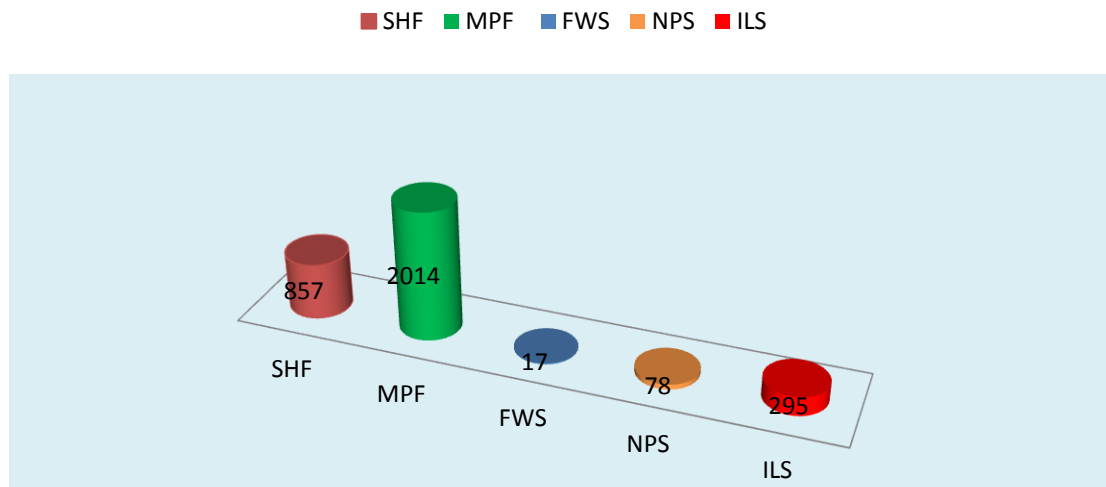


As usual, our biggest mobilizations are individual overhead resources. Equipment orders were down in 2013 however crew mobilizations were normal getting the Type 2IA crew out once and the Midewin Hotshots out numerous times.

In order to get individuals up to qualified status, most need multiple assignments to complete their taskbooks. 2013 was a typical year for filling trainee assignments however, what 2013 improved upon was the number of trainee orders we got without having to call EACC. Typically we have to make numerous calls to get someone out as a trainee, but this year the various GACCS were creating orders specifically for trainees, and once the Eastern Area priority trainee list was depleted, EACC was able to send to the dispatch centers, where individual trainees were showing available in ROSS, the orders.

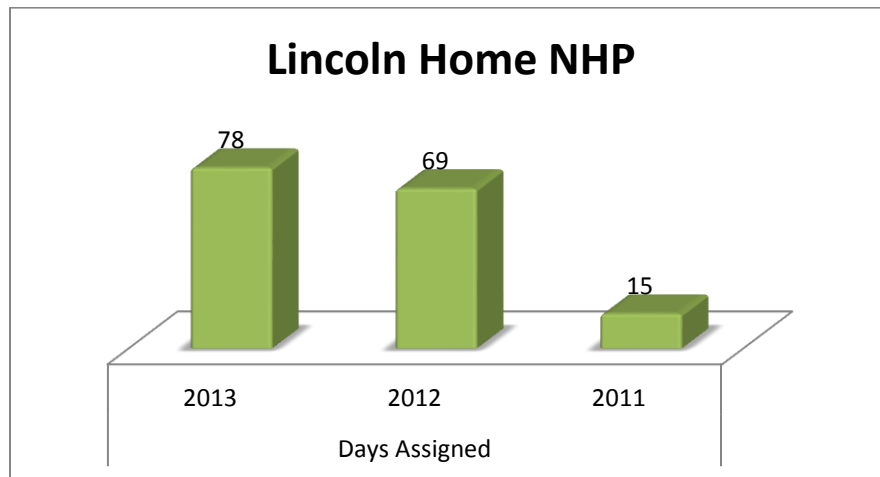


2013 Agency Personnel Committed (Days)



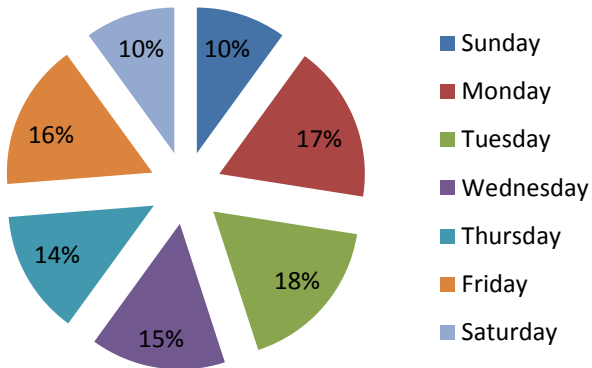
In 2013, all of our agencies/cooperators provided support to the National efforts. A total of 3261 work days were provided over the year. One of the most notable things is the increase in participation from the National Park Service (Lincoln Home National Historic Site). They not only provided more fills on resource orders than in previous years, their numbers of individuals with qualifications have increased, so I expect to see their numbers increase as the years go on.

Lincoln Home NHP

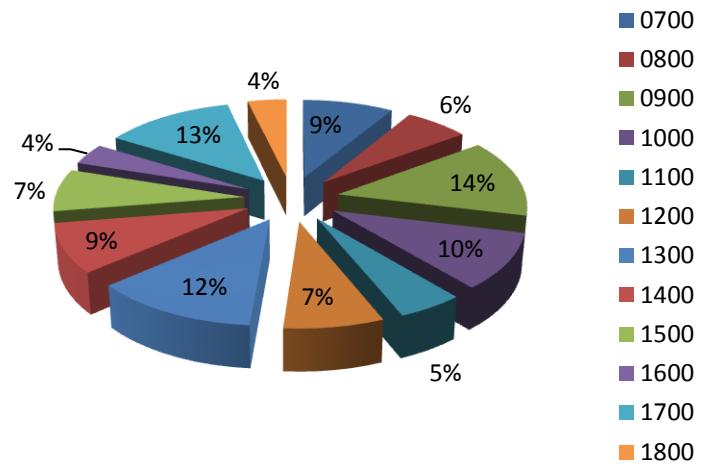


ILC responded employees and resources from the State of Illinois, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Forest Service, to every Geographic Area except Southern Area. We were able to lend a helping hand to many other area's in need during heavy fire activity this summer including sending folks to the RIM Fire in California, West Fork Complex in Colorado and the Lodge pole fire in Idaho.

Do you have my order yet?



Do you have my order yet - part 2?



These two graphs are just fun ways we in dispatch deal with the anxious call we field from resources that are sometimes not so patiently waiting for their resource orders. As you can tell there is NO clear pattern on what time and on what day we get orders. There are all sorts of variables that play into their timely arrivals and delays but there is one common thread, **you don't mobilize without a resource order!**

Don't let the numbers fool you. In 2013 ILC mobilized far more overhead orders than anything else, but getting crew orders and equipment orders processed proved to be no small feat. Coordinating flights and transportation for 20 plus crewmembers on an approximately bi-weekly rotation made us able to recite SATO travel phone numbers in our sleep. The professionalism and organization of Midewin IHC Management as well as our ILS Crew Bosses made these tasks much easier. **So for that, we thank you.**

Flights

